



INVEST FAQs and Criteria

Please make sure to read this document carefully before submitting completed applications.

Timeline

- **Deadline for application submission is Wednesday 22nd October 2025 at noon. Late applications will not be accepted.**

1 Background

Theatre and Dance NI (TDNI) is the sole support and professional membership organisation for theatre and dance in Northern Ireland with key goals to connect, support development and advocate for our artists and the industry.

Since 2017, TDNI have gathered evidence linking the sustainability of NI's cultural sector to the introduction of direct support for freelance artists. This programme has been shaped throughout by this extensive consultation as well as evaluation with artists, freelancers', sectoral stakeholders, and former participants.

2 Frequently Asked Questions

When is the deadline?

Deadline for application submission is Friday 17th October 2025 at noon. Late applications will not be accepted.

Where do I submit my application?

Please submit your application to invest@theatreanddancenl.org

Who can apply?

- We welcome individual applications from established artists, intending to develop their practice. If you are applying for the INVEST programme you should have professional experience of 5+ years in theatre, dance and/or circus.
- You must have an active membership with Theatre and Dance NI. If you are not a member you can sign up by [clicking here](#). **Please be aware that if you are not a member of Theatre and Dance NI before the closing deadline of this application, you will not be eligible for this bursary.**



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- We welcome applications from artists who have never applied for investment before.
- We actively welcome applications from underrepresented communities, including but not limited to D/deaf, disabled, neurodivergent, LGBTQIA+, and global majority artists.

Who cannot apply?

- Those living and working outside of Northern Ireland.
- Those in full time education (students) and / or training.
- Under 25s.
- Full time employees of funded organisations, production companies, venues or community groups.
- Theatre and Dance NI staff and board members.
- Belfast City Council or Arts Council of Northern Ireland staff or board members.

Please note, this is a fund for the individual artist therefore you cannot apply as part of or on behalf of a partnership or collaborative group.

What will I do on INVEST? (if you are applying for the fellowship INVEST programme, please see INVEST Fellowship Programme FAQs and Guidelines)

- **Bursary** - £4,000. The bursary is to be used for developing you and your professional practice. This could include but is not limited to training course fees, individual tuition, additional mentoring, attending conferences, networking, residencies, seeing other work, related travel and accommodation costs, and research and development.
- **Support** – Direct support from the TDNI team, sector colleagues across UK, Ireland and beyond including award-winning producer Steven Atkinson (Royal Court, Long Acre Arts, HighTide) who is both a mentor and consultant on programme delivery and design.
- **Mentoring** - One-to-one individual mentoring with industry experts based on your artform, what your aspirations are, what you want to achieve through the INVEST programme and the mentor's area of expertise. Previous mentors have included: Pádraig Cusack (inc. War Horse, Producer, The National), Dannielle Lecointe-Mosca (Choreographer, Director, Dramaturg & Creative Coach, ZooNation), Tom Jackson Greaves (Associate Director, Theatre Royal Plymouth) and Sharon Clarke (Dramaturg, Akram Khan Company).
- **Networking** - Group sessions to encourage interdisciplinary collaboration - where artists can expect to gain access to national and international industry leaders. Previous networking events have included The Performing Arts Forum Gathering (Where Connections Make Change, Sligo) which was an opportunity for our INVEST artists to come together with the rest of industry from across the island of Ireland,



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to connect and reflect on how we can collaboratively shape our future. [A full list of attendees can be found here.](#) Previous INVEST artists also attended networking events with **Charlie Bunker** (Co-director, imPOSSIBLE producing), David Byrne, (Artistic Director & CEO, New Diorama) and **Judith Dimant** (Exec Producer at Complicité), **Ciaran Walsh** (Associate Director, *Culture Ireland*) and **Shelia Creevy** (Chief Executive, Dance Ireland).

- **Training** - Skills development training sessions and workshops including an induction and two professional development residencies.

As part of the programme, TDNI will schedule several professional development training sessions. Most sessions will be held in person in Belfast. Some sessions have been pre-designed, and others will be co-designed with participants. While participants are advised to attend all sessions where possible, it is required you attend a minimum of six.

What is the difference between the INVEST programme and INVEST Fellowship Programme?

The INVEST Programme is for established artists with a minimum of 5 years' professional experience in theatre, dance and/or circus.

The INVEST Fellowship Programme is for emerging artists with a minimum of 3 years' professional experience in theatre, dance and/or circus.

Both programmes include the following:

- Networking opportunities.
- Personal time on your professional development.
- Direct support from the TDNI team, sector colleagues across UK, Ireland and beyond including award-winning producer Steven Atkinson

The INVEST Programme ONLY:

- One-to-one individual mentoring with industry experts.
- Two bespoke residencies and attendance at a minimum of six professional development sessions.

The INVEST Fellowship Programme ONLY:

- Direct support to develop your skills and knowledge around how to get the most out of an industry mentor.
- Two bespoke residencies and attendance at a minimum of three professional development sessions.



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How long is the programme?

The programme will run from October 2025 and conclude no later than July 2026.

Where will I need to be?

Most sessions will be held in person in Belfast. Mentor sessions will be held either in-person or online. Residential location is to be confirmed.

What can I spend my bursary on?

INVEST solely exists to support artists professional development. This could include but is not limited to:

- Training course fees.
- Individual tuition.
- Mentoring (in addition to any mentor selected by you and the TDNI team).
- Travel and accommodation at festivals, training etc.
- Attending networking events.
- Professional development training including but not limited to intensives, classes, workshops, conferences, and meetings.
- Research and development.
- Residences.
- Seeing other work.
- Audience development.
- Daily rates - you should include a fee to cover your time whilst preparing, researching, participating, and reflecting on your professional development activity/activities.

This bursary should be spent on the aspect of your practice you wish to develop. When paying yourself or other artists, you must use the industry standard day/week rates relevant to your discipline. Please see [Independent Theatre Council](#), [Equity](#), [UK Theatre](#) and [Writers' Guild](#) for guidance on the rates of pay.

Can I go outside of the island of Ireland as part of INVEST?

We encourage artists to go see and train nationally and internationally so INVEST can be used towards travel costs for professional development including but not limited to training, workshops or to go and see other work.

What can the bursaries NOT be used for?

- INVEST **DOES NOT** directly fund the creation, production or touring of work. INVEST can be put towards the research and development of your creative processes that will ultimately develop your professional practice.
- Requests for retrospective costs or programmes/courses/training that have already begun or completed.
- Commercial projects.



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- Work that forms part of under-graduate or post-graduate study or that will be assessed as part of an academic course.
- Work that forms part of existing professional or academic employment.

When does the programme take place?

Successful participants will be notified before the end of October 2025. The programme should conclude no later than July 2026. **All applicants must be available for the following compulsory elements of the programme:**

- Induction – 5th November 2025.
- Residential One – 26th – 27th January 2026.
- Residential Two - The Gathering – 25th to 28th May 2026.

Will you assign me a mentor?

We can help assign a mentor/s based upon your application and the skills you wish to develop. If you have a specific mentor/s in mind, please include this in your application. This will be discussed with you on commencement of the programme.

What if I want to work with/be mentored by somebody as part of INVEST who I have never worked with before?

This programme has been designed to support artists to build new connections and networks. Please include the names of anyone who you might wish to work with/be mentored by during the INVEST programme even if you have never met them before. If you are accepted onto the programme, the INVEST team will work collaboratively with you to make initial contact and assist you to develop a relationship.

I work for an organisation, can I apply?

This programme is designed for independent creatives only. If you are part-time in a creative role within an organisation, you are still welcome to apply if you can show that the professional development activity benefits your independent practice rather than the organisation or your role within the organisation. In addition, participants will be expected to attend compulsory sessions, so we urge you to consider this upon submission. You cannot apply if you are employed full time within an organisation.

I have had a bursary from Theatre and Dance NI before – can I apply again?

Yes, however you must have completed your previous evaluation report.

If you have been a previous participant in the INVEST programme, you are not eligible to apply. If you applied to the programme in the past and were unsuccessful, you may reapply.

Do I have to apply using the application form?



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You can apply using the application form or submit a pre-recorded video/audio file for questions where this is stated on the application form. Use **WeTransfer** or **Dropbox** to share your video/audio file. Please make sure the link/s are working before your submission. If you are applying via pre-recorded video/audio, submit your link under each relevant question on the digital application form.

What supporting evidence should I provide with my application?

- Supply no more than two examples of your artistic work.
- Supporting evidence that best exemplifies your work and is of good quality video/audio.
- Clearly label the work with a title (i.e. in the file name) to show what it is or where it was presented.
- If your practice is performance-based, share a clip of a relevant event/show, rather than still images.
- Choose a clip from a performance, rather than promotional film as we want to see examples of your work. This can include a show reel so long as it demonstrates you and your practice.
- Do not submit video/audio materials that are more than five minutes long or work that contains large amounts of text.
- Use **WeTransfer** or **Dropbox** to share files and make sure the link is working before submission.

How will I provide evidence of my development as part of the programme?

This is a publicly funded programme. Participants will be required to share their experiences, processes, and progressions with Theatre and Dance NI, their mentor and their fellow INVEST artists. Please indicate clearly in your application how you intend to report your progress.

What should I include in my budget?

Please include **all** projected costs in your budget to achieve what you would like to do through the INVEST programme. Any additional cost above the bursary amount will be at your own expense and should be clearly evidenced within your budget.

Is my information kept private?

Yes. All information provided to Theatre and Dance NI will be held in strict confidence and is held solely to evaluate your application. Information about Bursary recipients will be shared publicly with the approval of the Artist.

I've read the guidance and FAQ but still have a question. What should I do?

If you have any further questions, please contact invest@theatreanddanceNI.org.

3 Criteria for decisions

What is the INVEST panel looking for?



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The INVEST panel will select the applications that best deliver the stated mission of the programme:

- Support a diverse group of artists to develop their careers and practice.
- Support artists in the longer term to create and produce work to the highest professional standards.
- Support artists to develop and sustain their careers.

A good application will give a snapshot of your current creative practice and the professional development you wish to undertake through INVEST. We encourage you to be realistic about what can be achieved.

The panel will make their decision based on the information provided. The decision-making process will be evidence-based. It is important to include all details in the application and support material.

Please do not assume that the selection panel have any prior knowledge of you or your work. If the programme is oversubscribed, you may be required to attend an interview with the selection panel. This would be no longer than 30 minutes.

4 Decisions

The Expertise

Additional advice will be sought if a particular form of arts practice is believed to be outside the panel's expertise.

Successful applications

Successful applicants will receive a contract from TDNI, and payment of 70% once relevant signed paperwork has been received. The final 30% will be paid at the conclusion of the programme (July 2026). All payments will be processed within 30 days (about 4 and a half weeks) on receipt of an invoice.

Unsuccessful applications

We will let you know by email no later than the end of October 2025.



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